

MAR 30 2004

THE BAPTIST

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## IMB: Ambush survivor back in U.S.

DALLAS (BP) — The lone survivor of a bloody March 15 ambush on five Southern Baptist humanitarian aid workers in Iraq is back in the United States, according to the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Va.

Carrie McDonnell arrived on the evening March 20 at a Dallas-area hospital on a medivac flight from a U.S. Army hospital in Germany, where she was transported in critical condition after being treated at a U.S. military hospital in Iraq. She is reported to be in stable condition after the 12-hour flight.

Physicians who evaluated McDonnell on arrival are pleased with her condition and optimistic about recovery, IMB reported. She received wounds in the chest, face, and all four limbs in the attack.

The doctors reported that bones shattered by small arms fire in McDonnell's right arm and leg are aligned and healing. Her facial injuries do not appear to require reconstructive surgery, and while McDonnell lost most of three fingers on her left hand, her thumb and middle finger are intact, leaving her with a functional hand. Physicians also reported that her other wounds are healing well.

McDonnell has been heavily sedated since the attack, but since arriving in Dallas she has awakened and is responding to family, the doctors said.

Her husband David McDonnell died en



Larry Elliott



Jean Elliott



Karen Watson

route to a military hospital in Baghdad after the ambush, while Larry Elliott and his wife Jean died along with Karen Watson at the scene of the shootings. The identities of their assailants are unknown at present.

The five workers were in Iraq on a humanitarian assignment under the auspices of IMB, working on water purification projects. Initial reports indicate that an automobile with an unknown number of gunmen pulled alongside their automobile and opened fire.

During IMB's weekly chapel service on March 17 in Richmond, Va., the five workers were honored for their courage and commitment to God's work. A special video with footage of all the workers

was shown to the staff.

In the video, a smiling David McDonnell shared why he and his wife felt called to go to Iraq. "The love of God and the power of Christ can change any heart," David said while sitting next to his wife.

"[God] can turn people from violence into carrying the Sword of the Spirit ...and piercing the heart of people, not with bullets, but with the word of God," he said.

The testimonies of the four fallen workers will live on despite this tragedy, said IMB President Jerry Rankin. He shared words of encouragement with the staff via satellite from the Middle East, where he is presently traveling.

"How grateful we are for Larry, Jean, David, and Karen, and how we continue to lift Carrie to the Lord," Rankin said. "They were willing to invest their lives and die that there might be gain for the Kingdom of God."

David McDonnell's memorial service was held on March 20, at First Church in Lamar, Colo. Karen Watson's memorial service was held on March 24, at Valley Church in Bakersfield, Calif. Larry and Jean Elliott's memorial service was held on March 25, at First Church in Cary, N.C.



David McDonnell



Carrie McDonnell

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PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

MARCH 25, 2004  
VOL. 128  
No. 13

## List of Southern Baptist martyrs grows by four

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Southern Baptist workers, by the very nature of their daily life and ministry in communities throughout the world, have always lived with a measure of danger during the 157-year history of the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) and its successor, the International Mission Board (IMB), the Southern Baptist Convention. Twenty-five workers among the thousands sent out have been killed in violent circumstances since 1845.

• March 15, 2004 — Larry and Jean Elliott, working in Mosul, Iraq. Shot to death in an ambush by unknown assailants.

• March 15, 2004 — Karen Watson, working in Mosul, Iraq. Shot to death in an ambush by unknown assailants.

• March 15, 2004 — McDonnell, working in Mosul, Iraq. Shot to death in an ambush by unknown assailants.

• March 4, 2003 — Bill Hyde, working in Philippines. Killed by terrorist bomb at Davao City airport.

• December 30, 2002 — Bill Koens, working at Jibla Hospital in Yemen. Murdered by Islamic militant.

• December 30, 2002 — Martha Myers, working at Jibla Hospital in Yemen. Murdered by Islamic militant.

• December 30, 2002 — Kathy Garity, working at Jibla Hospital in Yemen. Murdered by Islamic militant.

• April 21, 1998 — Charles W. Hood Jr., working in Colombia, South America. Shot to death in his front door by unknown assailants.

• January 10, 1998 — Carl H. Johnson, working in China. Murdered by unknown assailants.

• January 16, 1972 — Mavis Pate, working in the Gaza area of the Middle East. Shot by Arab guerrillas in ambush.

• July 7, 1971 — Paul E. and Nancy Pater, working in the Dominican Republic. No details of their murders were available.

• January 10, 1951 — William L. Parker, working in China, died in communist prison.

• January 1942 — Rufus F. Gray, working in China. Died in Japanese camp for war prisoners in Baguio, Philippines.

• December 1880 — John Vestrup, working in Mexico. Murdered by band of 20 Indians and Mexicans.

• October 1861 — J. Landrum, working in China. Murdered by bandits attempting to assassinate invaders attacking the village of Chu Kiao, China.

• June 15, 1978 — Archie G. Dunaway Jr., working in Rhodesia. Killed by guerrillas seeking an African-majority government.

• March 11, 1973 — Gladys Hopewell, working in Taiwan. No details of her murder were available.

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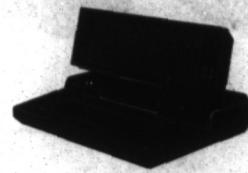
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Source: International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richmond, Va.

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**VOLUME 128 NUMBER 13**  
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$9.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date.

**M**ost people who have seen Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* are aware by now of the withering criticism from the nation's secular elitists that continues to be heaped upon Gibson, the movie's fans, and anyone else who dares defend Gibson's right to make the movie or anyone's right to see it.

The hysterics started more than a year before the movie was released, with liberal Jewish groups wringing their hands over the violence against Jews that Christians would inevitably commit after seeing the movie. There has been no violence. David Horowitz, the Jewish president of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture in Los Angeles, has called upon the leaders of those Jewish groups to publicly apologize for their inflammatory rhetoric.

Andy Rooney, longtime commentator on CBS television's *60 Minutes* news magazine, said he was speaking for God when he criticized the movie and pronounced Mel Gibson a "real nut case." He also told a national radio audience that he didn't intend to see the movie because, "I don't want to pay nine dollars just for a few laughs."

Gibson seems to be holding up quite well under the widespread condemnation coming his way, as the movie and assorted commercial tie-ins (books, jewelry, etc.) appear to ultimately be headed for the \$1,000,000,000 range. That's right; total revenue for this movie may top one billion dollars.

Gibson has tapped into a vein of movie audience gold that motion picture makers have ignored for years. So be it. Is anyone in Hollywood paying attention?

Yet the elitist criticism moves forward, and it isn't only Gibson who has come under fire. Filling this space in the March 5 issue of *The Baptist Record* was a commentary that satirized movie moguls and pointed out the positive features of *The Passion*. That commentary was picked up by Baptist Press and distributed world-

## One simple movie



Crucifixion scene from *The Passion of the Christ*

wide. GoogleNews.com picked up the commentary from Baptist Press and recorded 12,000 viewers per hour.

"How can you publish such charlatanism as journalism?" wrote one enraged e-mailer. "It is uncharitable, unkind, and just plain un-Christlike (and spare me the discourse on turning the other cheek and an eye for an eye)."

Another writer accused the author of the commentary — that would be me — of "bearing false witness," and went on to opine, "Could it be that all of the 'passion' created by Mr. Gibson's film caused you to forget, like him and many other Christian today, the importance of accuracy and integrity?"

It seems that the movie, Gibson, or anyone who comments positively about either is in for an elitist backlash. There's a simple explanation.

No one appreciates having their sin pointed out to them. I don't, you don't, nobody does, because it's embarrassing. Likewise, no one likes having pointed out

to them the tremendous sacrifice that had to be made to save us from those sins.

Seeing the big screen depiction of the suffering and death Christ accepted on my behalf broke my heart, and made me ashamed once again of every sin I ever committed in my life. That was very uncomfortable for me, but the message of the movie was truth in its purest form.

There are those people, even in the Christian community, who refuse to accept the Truth that is Jesus, the Christ. They lash out at those who do believe and who seek to deliver a lost world from the lies and bondage of sin. The unrelenting scorn and ridicule piled upon this one simple movie and its fans are best explained by Jesus Himself in the film:

*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. (John 15:18 NIV)*

Our task is great (Matthew 28:18-20), and it's time to get serious about it. Like the many generations of Christians before us, may we be equal to the challenge and immune to the criticism.

## GUEST OPINION:



### *So many 'whys'*

By Erich Bridges, senior writer  
International Mission Board

Why? That anguished one-word question is being asked by many people after five Southern Baptist aid workers were shot in Iraq on March 15. Larry and Jean Elliott and Karen Watson died on the spot, after automatic weapons fire and rocket-propelled grenade fragments tore into their vehicle. David McDonnell succumbed the next morning as U.S. military surgeons struggled to save him. His wife Carrie, critically wounded, has been stabilized and is being treated after being flown to a Dallas hospital.

The why question encompasses multiple whys. Why were they attacked? Why were they in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul? Why did they go to Iraq in the first place? Why were they working there amid obvious dangers?

Why they were attacked and by whom remains unknown, but there's no shortage of speculation as investigation of the tragedy gets under way.

Why they were in Mosul is an easier question to answer. They were looking for ways to

assist the people of the city, particularly in producing clean water. Larry Elliott, with many years of experience in disaster relief ministries in Central America, had worked briefly in southern Iraq last year in several water purification projects. He had only recently returned to Iraq with his wife Jean to help in longer-term projects. The McDonaulls also had previously served in the region.

Karen Watson had worked in and around Iraq for more than a year, coordinating relief projects and the volunteers who came to carry them out. She had been studying Arabic in a nearby country and had just returned to Iraq to continue serving people in need.

Why did they willingly come

to Iraq in the first place, despite its many and increasing dangers? That's the simplest question of all, but the answers are hard for many of us to comprehend.

American Christians generally accept — in theory — that God might ask us one day to risk our lives for Him. For believers accustomed to freedom and comfort, however, the theory is easier to deal with than the reality. Viewers of the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, have learned anew what Christ Himself willingly suffered. He calls His followers to be prepared for similar treatment at any time.

That's not what the Elliotts, the McDonaulls, and Karen Watson had in mind as they drove through Mosul on March

15. They were excited about the potential development projects they had identified. They were intent on serving needy Iraqis. They knew what general precautions they needed to take.

They also trusted in God's protection, but they had no illusions about the continuing risks. Watson in particular had experienced several previous close calls in Iraq and was experienced in training other workers to avoid dangers.

Before they left for Iraq, the Elliotts visited their longtime home church, Baptist Temple Church in Reidsville, N.C.

The Elliotts sent an e-mail to family and friends shortly after they arrived in Iraq. "We are happy to be here and our call has been confirmed," they said. "We love you all."

The dangers in this world aren't going away any time soon, but the needs of suffering people for help and hope continue. May the spirit of the Elliotts, the McDonaulls, and Karen Watson shape our hearts for the challenge.

*Bridges is based in Richmond, Va. Bridges' commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.*

# Photojournalists gather at Southwestern

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Twenty-three years ago in a hospital bed, photographer Bill Fortney spent three days awaiting the results of cancer tests. While many thoughts ran through his mind, it was what was absent from his mind that changed his life.

"Do you know what is the one thing I did not think about one time during those three days?" Fortney asked during his presentation at the 2004 Southwestern Photojournalism Conference on the campus of Southwestern Seminary on March 5. "Becoming a famous photographer. In those three days ... I got the wakeup call."

Fortney explained to a crowd of more than 250 at the three-day conference at the Fort Worth seminary that up to that moment, becoming a famous photographer had taken priority over his relationships with his wife and children, his friends, and even with God.

"I'm not saying you shouldn't strive to be the best photographer you can be. You should," he said. "But that can't be the number one thing in your life, because if it is, you're going nowhere."

Today, Fortney is regarded as one of the premier nature photographers in America. With more than 33 years of professional photography experience, his books, *America from 500 Feet*, *The Nature of America*, and *Bill Fortney's Great Photography Workshop!* have all been best-sellers. Fortney recently joined Nikon Corporation as its professional service representative for the national nature market.

All of his successes, Fortney asserted, came only after he gave up on the narrow goal of being famous and instead focused on serving God.

"Everything that I had been striving for before [getting cancer] started to happen," he said. "I got it all when I quit trying to get it."

One of his dreams since early childhood had been to be an air-

plane pilot. In 2000, he and his son Wesley, crossed the country taking photographs from 500 feet above the ground in an ultralight airplane. They published their visual experience in their book, *America from 500 Feet*.

"If I could go back and erase that cancer experience from my life, I wouldn't do it," Fortney said. "I've had 23 years that I would have never had, and my life is better than I ever dreamed it could be."

Anacleto Rapping, a Los Angeles Times photographer, also emphasized that greater success comes from striving to glorify God first and resisting the temptation to be proud.

"Can you glorify God by being the best photojournalist you can be? Absolutely," he said. "If that is your calling, [then] be the best photojournalist, or the best designer or the best interior photographer. ... If that is what God is calling you to, do your best for God and he is going to bring you opportunities to glorify Him within that."

Rachel LaCour Niesen said she has learned to see how God's calling to ministry can be expressed through photography beginning with her first photojournalism conference several years ago. The conference is for "those who believe photojournalism to be a calling and the act of bearing witness to be important," according to conference organizers.

"I have discovered that photography itself is not a direct calling," said Niesen, a speaker at the conference. "It is only a tool to use to communicate your calling, which is from God. The photographs are not the end result. They are paving stones on a life-long journey that all of us are in various stages of."

Niesen and her husband Andrew run their own photography business, Lacour-Niesen Visuals. She told participants to seek out their calling, but cautioned that there



LOOKING IT OVER — Gary Fong, director of editorial graphics technology for the San Francisco Chronicle, offers suggestions to Anke Leuschner of Hamburg, Germany, concerning her portfolio. Fong is a committee member of the Southwestern Photojournalism Conference. (BP photo courtesy of Southwestern Seminary)

must be balance. Participants at the conference were given note cards in which they were asked to write on one side three things they are passionate about photographing. Later, Niesen asked them to write three things on the other side that they are passionate about that have nothing to do with photography.

"For a long time, the only side of my card that was filled out was my passion for storytelling ... the other side of my card was blank," she said. "If I am completely focused on photojournalism, I am probably neglecting other vital aspects of my journey. Photography is only a tool for living or personal calling. We must consider how to create balance in our lives."

The photojournalism conference also featured Andrew Niesen, Tara Patty, Gary Russ, Greg Breeding, and Barry Gutierrez who won the Pulitzer Prize along with a team of photographers for their coverage of the Colorado wildfires last summer.

Writer and photographer Ron Londen has attended every conference since it began

## THE BAPTIST Record

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

MARCH 25, 2004

VOL. 128

NO. 13

in 1992. He was the first conference's first speaker, and has spoken a total of four times over the years. He is also one of the original members of the Christians in Photojournalism ministry, which supports the conference.

"That first event was just such a phenomenal event that we knew we were really on to something," Londen said. "It was so heartfelt and every speaker was sharing from their heart a different aspect of their Christian walk and how it relates to photography."

The 2005 Southwestern Photojournalism Conference is scheduled for Feb. 25-27. More information will be available as the conference draws nearer at [www.swpjc.org](http://www.swpjc.org). The conference is annually hosted by Southwestern Seminary and supported by Christians in Photojournalism.

### Looking back

10 years ago

A bill that would provide funds to purchase Clarke College is passed by the Mississippi Legislature and signed by Governor Kirk Fordice. The state will use the campus as a youth ranch, if the offer to buy is accepted by the Mississippi Baptist Convention at its annual meeting.

20 years ago

Insisting ordination of women is an issue to be settled only by the local church, directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta reaffirm the agency's current policy which does not require ordination as a qualification for missionary appointment.

50 years ago

A letter to the editor reads, "I think your paper is very much biased. I never see any articles by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick of New York ... if you would use your brain (if you had any) you would print some of the things he has written." Editor Goodrich's reply: "We are not planning to give any publicity to any modernist."



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

### VBS expanding

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — LifeWay Christian Resources, the nation's leading provider of Vacation Bible School (VBS) curriculum, announced March 15 it will add a second line of VBS resources beginning in 2005 to meet the demand of entities for wider selection in their summer evangelism and outreach ministries. The themes of the 2005 VBS lines will be unveiled this August. Promotional packets will be available only in the fall, and the full lines of curriculum will be available for purchase Dec. 1 through [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com), by phone and in LifeWay Christian Stores. LifeWay has provided churches with VBS literature for more than 80 years, including curriculum in English and Spanish for preschool, children, youth, adult and special education needs. Customers currently choose from a wide array of VBS resources to meet their specific needs: directors' guides, teaching aids, student handbooks, set decorations, themed Bibles, music CDs, program DVDs, promotional helps, and much more. VBS seeks to provide a fun-filled spiritual adventure for boys and girls involving concentrated Bible study and encourages real-life application. For more information about LifeWay's 2004 VBS theme, log on to [www.lifeway.com/yourvbs](http://www.lifeway.com/yourvbs).

# Texas church grieves slain, injured workers

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — David McDonnell, one of four Baptist workers killed March 15 in Iraq, and his wife Carrie "endeared themselves to our church," pastor Michael Dean said.

The McDonnells, kneeling at the altar of Travis Avenue Church, were commissioned and prayed for by the congregation before they departed last fall for fulltime service in Iraq.

"No doubt that image is still very vivid in the minds of many of our people," Dean said. "It puts a very personal touch to the risk of the calling of missions."

The spiritual impact of McDonnell's death may extend far beyond the Fort Worth congregation, Dean reflected.

"On a road in northern Iraq, there was a collision between some American civilians and some Iraqi terrorists, but it was really much more than that. It was a collision between love and hate."

Everybody knows, Dean said, that "love always wins out."

"This could be a hint that a spiritual awakening is in the future for Iraq," the pastor said. "If it holds true that the blood of the martyrs is the fuel of the fires of the Gospel being spread, this could be a great note of hope that the Gospel could make great inroads in that part of the world."

Dean recalled a visit with the McDonnells in his office last fall as David wondered aloud about security concerns in Iraq and even whether he should buy a gun. As they talked, it became clear they would choose to heed any recommended safety precautions but, otherwise, they would trust in the Lord.

Speaking with McDonnell's parents in Colorado the day after his death, Dean said he had an opportunity to tell them "their son was one of the most godly and courageous young men that I've ever met."

McDonnell's wife Carrie, the lone survivor of the drive-by shooting attack in



David and Carrie McDonnell

which David and three other IMB workers were killed, is being treated for extensive wounds in a Dallas hospital.

The couple met while serving as two-year Journeymen with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in northern Africa and the Middle East. They subsequently enrolled at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth to prepare for further service.

Last summer, the McDonnells led a team of about a dozen Southwestern students to Iraq on a three-week volunteer trip to do food distribution, renovate an elementary school, and explore possibilities for other humanitarian initiatives in northern Iraq.

During that trip, the couple celebrated their first wedding anniversary.

David McDonnell, 29, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo., had an "absolutely charismatic personality ... [and] always had a story to tell about the adventures of being a worker in the Middle East," said Brennan Searcy, a Southwestern Ph.D. Old Testament student who participated in the volunteer trip the McDonnells led to Iraq last summer.

McDonnell "loved God with all his heart and had a heart for the people of the Middle East to know Christ," Searcy said.

Carrie McDonnell, 26, a native of Sulphur Springs, Texas, meanwhile, is a "strong, godly girl who loved her husband and [is] a skilled missionary herself" with a similar heart for God and the people of the region, Searcy said.

## Elliotts knew risks in Iraq, but followed God's call

CARY, N.C. (BP) — The last time Reca Davis saw Larry and Jean Elliott, the couple was in the States, preparing for their service in Iraq.

For some 25 years the Elliotts had served in Honduras, but they felt called to go elsewhere.

"[T]hey truly knew that it was God's calling for them to go [to Iraq]," Davis, a friend of the Elliotts, told Baptist Press. "We certainly support that, because we know that they were people that would just do exactly what they felt was God's will."

On March 15 the Elliotts were killed, along with two Baptist co-workers, in a drive-by shooting attack in northern Iraq. Larry Elliott was 60; Jean Elliott, 58. Both were members of First Church in Cary, N.C., before their service in Honduras. When the Elliotts were home, they would stay at the church's mission house.

Davis and her husband Lynn, also First Church members, had known the Elliotts for years but

their friendship grew deeper during a short-term mission trip to Honduras last November.

"We were in Honduras when they were praying about going to Iraq, and they asked for us to be in prayer with them about that," Reca Davis said, "and we did. We prayed a lot with them on that."

She and Jean Elliott bonded nearly instantly.

"That was a wonderful week where we did some other things hand in hand with Larry and Jean to

support the ministries there in Honduras," Davis said. "The most joyful part was just having the privilege of working side by side with two people who just love the Lord and had a wonderful time doing it."

Larry, she said, had a "very mischievous kind of laugh."

"It was always uplifting to be around the two of them. What an inspiration," Davis said.

Back in 1998 the Elliotts played a key role in ministering to Hondurans affected by Hurricane Mitch, which killed

more than 5,600 people and left more than 200,000 homeless. Larry Elliott was quoted in a 1999 Baptist Press story as saying that

new churches had resulted from the work of Southern Baptist volunteers and personnel.

"We are in the midst of one of the most powerful revivals I have ever experienced," Elliott said at the time.

In at least one instance, the relief effort cleared a road to an area that had no road prior to the hurricane.

"For the first time, a vast area will be exposed to vehicular transportation and the penetration of the Gospel," Elliott said.

Davis said she knows the Elliotts are in a better place now, with the Lord, knowing they followed His will. She last heard from them in a letter she received in February.

"Jean wrote it on the 18th of February as they were going over to Baghdad," Davis said. "[It was] a really fun note reflecting back on a lot of the fun times we had over our time

in Honduras. ... That is something certainly that I treasure."

Larry Elliott received a master of divinity degree from Southeastern Seminary in 1978. That summer he completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

Jean Elliott completed 19 hours as a non-degree student in 1977-78 and worked as an assistant in the seminary library.

"Southeastern Seminary mourns

the loss of two members of our seminary family, as well as a precious friend from Bakersfield, Calif.," said Southeastern President Daniel Akin, referencing another of the slain missionaries, Karen Watson, who worked with Southeastern graduate Andy Prince and his wife Kristine to start a new church in Bakersfield.

The Elliotts are survived by three adult children: Gina Elliott Kim of Houston, Texas; Todd Elliott in Arlington, Va.; and Scott Elliott in Raleigh, N.C.



Larry T. Elliott



Jean D. Elliott

## BARGAIN RELIGION

We live in a world of bargain hunters! I suppose it is that way around the world and it is certainly true of the American populace. If you travel down to Central and South America you can visit the markets and try to bargain them down from their initial price. They expect it and often seem to enjoy it. In America, we wait for the stores to surprise us and run an ad in the paper saying, "SALE - 50% OFF" and the bigger the bargain, the larger the crowd rushing to take advantage. Everybody wants more for less and preferably something for nothing! In a sense, that is what the Christian would call good stewardship.

I often tell people when they say something about a tie or a suit I have on that looks expensive, that if you see it on my body it was either on sale or given to me. In that sense, bargains are good and helpful to the family budget!

The other day I was in one of those humongous bookstores. You know, the kind that carries everything and has thousands and thousands of books. I was looking for a book that had recently gone on the Best Seller list and seemed to be interesting and appealing to me. As I looked for it I saw a whole section in this book store with a big sign over it



# Directions

**Jim Futral**, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

that said, "Bargain Religion." Of course, there were other sections that said "Bargain Travel," "Bargain Cookbooks," and "Bargain Fiction." But, this is the one that caught my attention — "Bargain Religion." I just stopped there staring at the sign thinking how many people in this world are looking for just that — "Bargain Religion."

I must confess that you can find "Bargain Religion" in this world. It is the kind of religion that doesn't cost you much, if anything. It's the sort of religion that makes little or no commitment of time, energy, or relationships. It is the sort of religion that if things are not easily done and simply acquired you throw up your hands, forget about it, and go on your way. It is also the kind of religion that takes little thought, even less personal evaluation, and virtually no change. Mostly, it is designed for personal satisfaction and its goal is "Feel Good-ism!" Much of the time it is

a personally designed religion and ultimately only leads to destruction.

The writer of Proverbs tells us about this sort of "Bargain Religion" when he says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death." There are a lot of people who get their religion at the "Bargain Religion" counter of life. Often they will do so while rejecting what they call formal religion, or institutional religion, or church. You can hear them say, "I just don't believe in all that organized religion!"

Most people looking for "Bargain Religion" want to do it without God intruding into their lives, requiring anything of them, directing them, or expecting anything from them except what they want to do. The very first worship service ever recorded in Scripture tells of two men going to worship — brothers Cain and Abel. Cain, you will remember, brought a gift that was not

accepted, but what you also need to note is that Cain's spirit was not right and he was unwilling to listen to God. God cared about Cain and did not want him to leave with the attitude of anger, distrust, and unbelief, yet Cain ignored God's call.

The fact is that "Bargain Religion" is not to be found in the Bible because the experience with God revealed in Scripture costs. In fact, the cost is beyond any and everything all of us combined could muster up. It cost God His Son! It cost Jesus His life! It cost us total surrender! Expensive? I should say so! For the value of the salvation that we have in Jesus Christ is beyond the wealth of the worlds all combined. Now, here is the amazing thing. You can't find this religion on a bargain basement table of any bookstore or on some merchandise rack. God in His grace, mercy, and generosity turns and offers it to us free! The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank God! Salvation is free! It is not by my works or my deep knowledge. It is offered free by a Savior who paid my debt! It is free!

Now, if you want to talk bargain, here it is. Salvation in Christ is the most expensive commodity ever provided and it is given to us at no cost whatsoever! We simply receive it from the hand of God.

## Watson pastor: 'This girl sold out to Jesus'

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (BP) — Karen Watson counted the cost. Then she followed God with her heart and with her head as she entered the war zone of Iraq to share with people there the message that had made her willing to sacrifice everything.

"To obey is my objective. To suffer is expected. His glory will be my reward," Watson wrote in a letter to her pastor, meant only to be opened upon her death.

Watson, 38, of Bakersfield, Calif., was one of four Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) workers killed March 15 when the vehicle they were riding in was ambushed in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. Also killed were Larry Elliott, 60, and Jean Elliott, 58, of Cary, N.C., and David McDonnell, 29, of Rowlett, Texas. McDonnell's wife, Carrie, 26, was flown to a Dallas-area hospital on March 20.

Phil Neighbors, co-pastor at Valley Church in Bakersfield where Watson had been a member since 1997, said Watson accepted Christ about eight years ago after an intense period of grief. Her boyfriend whom she planned to marry, her father, and her grandmother all died within a two-year span.

"That really shook her foundation," Neighbors told Baptist Press. "Those crises led her to turn to the Lord. She came to know Christ and was one of the very special people that just loved the Word of God and the work of God. She was passionate about it."

Watson immediately began taking part in short-term mission trips with Valley Church, including two to El Salvador and one to Kosovo, Macedonia, and Greece in the fall of 2002.



Karen D. Watson

beginning in March 2003, but with the relatively quick end of major combat operations, the anticipated flood of refugees did not come. Watson was then assigned to Iraq with a change of plans.

"We talked about the danger numerous times before she left and while she was there," Neighbors said. "She would always call me whenever anything would happen... For instance, when the [United Nations] building was bombed and numerous people were killed. She had been working with the UN in that very building coordinating relief efforts. She was in and out of that building daily, and just by the providence of God she was not there the day of the bombing. She quickly called me to say she was safe, and she did that several times when there was trouble."

March 15 was different, however. Neighbors and other church members heard news that five IMB workers had been shot in Iraq.

"That experience led her to a realization that God was calling her into missions," Neighbors said. The church directed her to the IMB, and she was accepted to serve overseas. She resigned from her job as a detention officer at the Kern County Sheriff's Department in Bakersfield and sold her house and her car.

"This girl sold out for Jesus," Neighbors said, noting Watson had a good job at the sheriff's department involving the evaluation and placement of inmates.

IMB personnel noticed Watson's unique skills in administration and leadership, and they assigned her to coordinate refugee relief in conjunction with Operation Iraqi Freedom. She set up a base of operations in Jordan

"I was thinking, 'Well, maybe Karen will call in a minute. She always calls,'" Neighbors said, "but she didn't call."

Later that night Neighbors remembered the letter Watson had written to him before she left for work in Iraq with the instructions that he was not to open it unless she was killed. He opened the letter.

Neighbors called the letter a powerful testimony and evidence that if anything happened to her, she wanted him and the church family to know she had no regrets and died serving the Lord.

Roger Spradlin, co-pastor of Valley Church, described Watson as a person who deeply loved God and had a heart for winning people to Christ. "She was very compassionate for people in need," he told Baptist Press. "She was very committed to service and ministry to people."

Spradlin recalled Watson's enthusiasm for mission trips and the tremendous impact she had on college girls in the church as she taught and mentored them before she left for Iraq.

"She was very, very brave, and she knew the risk of being in that part of the world," Spradlin said, "but she weighed that risk against the people's need for the Gospel."

In Bakersfield, Watson also worked with Southeastern Seminary graduate Andy Prince and his wife Kristine to start a new congregation, Sure Foundation Church.

"Karen was a real soldier in God's Army and she will be greatly missed," Prince said, "but we know that she is now celebrating and worshiping the God she served."

Gerald Boyd, a member of Valley Church who accompanied Watson on the volunteer trip to Kosovo, told The Bakersfield Californian that Watson knew what she was doing in serving in Iraq.

"Karen was the most sincere person I've ever met," Boyd said. "She loved Jesus with all her heart."

## Nominees

### sought for MBC posts

Members of the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Committee on Nominations will soon begin meeting and reviewing the trustee/board member positions on the boards and commissions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention for 2005.

According to Alan Woodward, committee chairman and pastor of First Church, Ellisville, there are a limited number of vacancies to be filled on the following boards and commissions:

- Board of Ministerial Education
- Christian Action Commission
- Education Commission
- Historical Commission
- Baptist Children's Village
- Mississippi Baptist Foundation
- Baptist Health Systems, Inc., Jackson
- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc., Memphis
- Blue Mountain College
- Mississippi College
- William Carey College
- Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Nominating Committee will work in conjunction with the heads of the institutions and agencies in bringing a list of nominees to be approved by the messengers at the 169th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention on October 26-27.

Nomination forms can be obtained by contacting the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Executive Administration, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530; telephone (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: [bbbox@mbcb.org](mailto:bbbox@mbcb.org).

Completed forms should be mailed to the Committee on Nominations, MBC Executive Administration, at the above address to be received by May 15.

## JUST FOR THE RECORD

East McComb Church, McComb, recently ordained **Ricky Ivey** as a deacon. Pictured (from left) are Rick Kennedy, pastor, his wife Sandra, Ivey's wife Anita, and Ivey.



**Rick & Sandra Kennedy and Rickey & Anita Ivey**

Enterprise Church, Myrtle, ordained **Don Shaffer** to the ministry February 8. Shaffer is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Lee County. Pictured (from left) are Shaffer and Tony B. Monk, pastor of Enterprise.

Lawrence Church, Lawrence, recently licensed **Chris Kelly** to preach. Kelly is currently employed by the MSU Center for Safety and Health. He is available for pulpit supply and can be reached



**Comans, Byrne, Kelly, and DeMoney, pastor**

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**Don Shaffer and Tony Monk, pastor**

at (601) 683-7897. Pictured (from left) are Dwight Comans, Robert Byrne, Kelly, and Paul DeMoney, pastor.

rial service. The Yarbroughs were also presented with gifts on behalf of the church members. A reception followed.



**The Yarbroughs**

February 15. Pictured (from left) are Troy Mercer, pastor, Gordon, Charles Davis, Pike County Associational Director, and Craig Richardson.



**Merger, pastor; Gordon, Davis, Pike Assn. Dir.; & Richardson**

James and Mae Yarbrough were honored at Gum Branch Church, Winston Association, February 29 for 30 years of service. Paul Blanchard, Director of Missions, presented a certificate of appreciation and a proclamation from 29 Winston Association churches that declared February 29 as James Yarbrough Day. Steve Stone, MBCB, presented a letter from Jim Futral, MBCB, and a certificate of appreciation of ministe-

Tangipahoa Church, Summit, ordained **Preston Gordon** to the ministry

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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



**Joey Jackson & Lora Ethridge**

Tangipahoa Church, Summit, held a youth fund raiser valentine banquet recently. Joey Jackson and Lora Ethridge were king and queen. Troy Mercer is pastor.

The men of Monument



**Adams, Taylor, Mitchell, and King, pastor**

Gracewood Church, Southaven, celebrated their tenth anniversary February 22 with 353 in Sunday School, 500 in worship, 400 for lunch, and an afternoon presentation of God With Us. Speakers included E. Lowell Adams, Armond Taylor, and Ronnie Mitchell. Bill W. King is pastor.

Drive Church, Tupelo, recently held a chili cook-off and dessert bake-off. Pictured are the winners (from left) Larry Lindsey, Steven Owen, Scott Tackett, Jay Marshall, and Kevin Long.

Temple Church, Petal, has announced their newest mem-

bers by baptism. Pictured (from left) are Larissa Pierce, Kelsey Riels, Sam Graham, Nikki Graham, and Rachelle Graham.

Society Hill Church, Oakvale, will have a study of Revelation March 29-31 at 7 p.m. Bill Nobles will lead.



**Pierce, Riels, S. Graham, N. Graham, & R. Graham**



**Lindsey, Owen, Tackett, Marshall, & Long**

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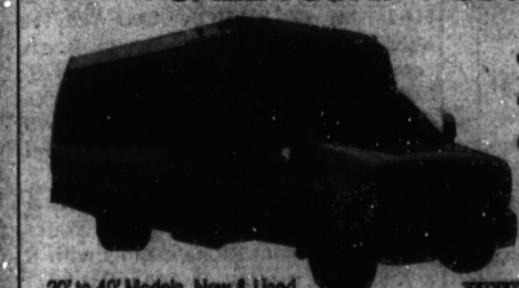
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## NAMES IN THE NEWS

Theresa Rikard, GA leader, presented sashes and badges to the GAs of College Hill Heights Church, Lafayette Association. Jennifer Sharp is the assistant leader.

Beulah Church, Lexington, held a note



Pleasant Dale Church Deacons, Thaxton

burning for their fellowship hall December 28 in memory of Ann Heard who passed away in November. Pictured (from left) are Doug Lawson, pastor, Buster McNeer, Billy Gilmore, Mills Heard, George Martin,

and Bill White.

Pleasant Dale Church, Thaxton, recently held appreciation day for the deacons and their wives. The men have



Beulah Church Note Burning, Lexington



GAs of College Hill Church, Lafayette Association

### Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
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GBUJB KQ MKP

JKCRUCJVHB AV KQ LUC?

YCX UQ U LYH HBV

HNPHB, GBM XK MV

CKH OVDUVRV AV?

ZKBC VUWBH:  
QKNHM-LUS

Clue: J = C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Colossians 4:6



Pharris and Gross, pastor

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**GRANDVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH**, 900 S. Pearson Road, Pearl, Miss., seeks bi-vocational minister of music. Call (601) 939-4215.

**NURSERY WORKER NEEDED**, Parkway Baptist Church, Hernando. Wednesday evenings 6:00 - 8:00, Sunday evenings 4:30 - 8:00 and special events. Minimum age 18. Send resume to 50 N. Parkway, Hernando, MS 38632, attn: Mrs. Stephanie Gilder.

degree in criminal justice from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM), and a doctorate in education from the University of Mississippi.

In addition to his time with DPS, Marx served as a special assistant attorney general, chief of staff for the state auditor, executive assistant and chief of staff for Mississippi Governor Bill Allain, and chairman of the Mississippi Tax Commission. He retired from state government in 1992, moved to Hattiesburg, and began teaching at USM.

Marx was an active member of Temple Church, Hattiesburg, where he served as deacon and

Sunday School teacher. He was men's ministry director for Lebanon Association in Hattiesburg, and served as leader or team member on a number of mission trips to Honduras,

Jamaica, Mexico, and Russia.

He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Ernestine Gatlin Marx of Hattiesburg; two sons; one daughter; one brother; and one sister.

## OBITUARY

## COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

The Division of Church Music Ministries at NOBTS extends an invitation to ministers of music and a guest to attend An Evening of Humor and Inspiration April 1 at 6:15 p.m. in the Creole Room, NOBTS campus. RSVP is by March 29. Call (504) 282-4455 ext. 3229 or email gabrielsesec@nobts.edu.

The Clarke College Alumni Association will assemble at the Central Mississippi Residential Center April 17 from 8:30 a.m.-noon for a reunion. Graduates from the 70's will meet at First Church, Newton, April 16 at 6:30 p.m. All alumni and friends are welcome. A special Lottie Moon offering will be received. Final plans for an alumni mission project will be set for July 11-16 with a Hispanic congregation, Laurel. Election of 2004-2005 officers will be a part of this day. Charles Melton will be the featured speaker. For more information, visit [www.ClarkeCollege.com](http://www.ClarkeCollege.com).

## STAFF CHANGES

Macedonia Church, Meridian, recently called Shane Pharris as youth and children's minister. Pharris is a student at Meridian Community College. Pictured (from left) are Pharris

and Jason Gross, pastor.

Liberty Church, Liberty, has called Jimmy Bilbo as minister of music and senior adults. Bilbo resides in McComb.

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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



**Robbins, Rickels, Dillard, Morgan, and Dowdy, pastor**

**Cairo Church, Ecru**, observed Baptist Men's Day January 25. The worship speakers were Gerald Robbins, Jerry Rickels, Tommy Dillard, and David Morgan. Pictured (from left) are Robbins, Rickels, Dillard, Morgan, and Bill Dowdy, pastor.

**North Columbia Church, Columbia**, held a note burning ceremony to celebrate the retiring of their sanctuary debt February 29. Pictured (from left) are building committee members Jerry Pittman, Mike Grenn, pastor, Elwood Pittman, Jimmy McDaniel, Melvin Jones, Dan McKenzie, Pete Rowell, and Ralph Prine.

Todd Clayton, Meridian, spoke to the Awana Clubs of Clarke-Venable Church, Decatur, February 15. He shared a video and pictures of the 2002 mission trip to the Ukraine that he participated in. Pictured (from left) are Mackenzie Gannon, Clayton, Katy Ezelle, Debbie Addy, and Cody Addy.

The children (pictured) of Clarke-Venable Church, Decatur, held a valentine's party February 13.

The celebration choir of Agricola Church, Lucedale,



**Gannon, Clayton, Ezelle, D. Addy, and C. Addy**

will present Bow the Knee, a dramatic musical for Easter, April 10 and 11 at 7 p.m. Brad Day is the minister of praise and worship.

**Zion Hill Church, Wesson**, will present the Palmetto State Quartet April 16 at 7 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. Admission is \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door on day of the concert. A fish fry will be held prior to the concert from 4-6 p.m. with tickets for \$8 and \$6. For more information, call (601) 643-5145.

The choir of **Sylvarena Church, Wesson**, will perform Evidence of Grace, narrated by Graham Smith, MBCB, and his wife Alice on April 4 at 4 and 7 p.m. Karen Hardy is the music director.

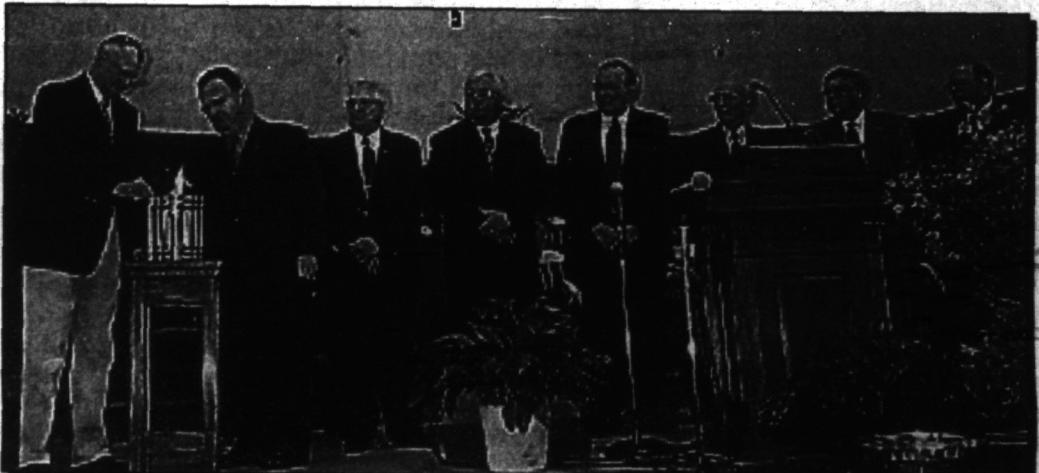
**Lamar Association** will hold an area-wide crusade March 28-April 1 at the Multi-Purpose Building, Purvis. Times are Sunday at 6 p.m. and Monday-Thursday at 7 p.m. Jimmy Russell is the evangelist and Billy Nelson will provide music.

**First Church, Pearl**, will present He's Alive, a musical drama, April 2 and 4 at 7 p.m. For more information, call (601) 939-4476.

**Park Haven Church, Laurel**, will present a live drive through crucifixion April 3 and 4 from 7-9 p.m. All are welcome.

10:30 a.m. A kick-off rally will be held April 24 and a supporting message will be presented each Sunday throughout the campaign.

**Moselle Memorial Church, Moselle**, will present Josh Hunt March 28. He will lead 10:30 a.m. worship and will lead Disciple Making Teachers from 3-5 p.m. Call (601) 582-9428 for more information. Hunt will also be at Temple Church, East Campus, (601) 554-9720, on March 27 and Highland Church, Laurel, (601) 428-8493, on March 29.



**North Columbia Church Note Burning, Columbia**



**Children of Clarke Venable Church, Decatur**

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*Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.*

*Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)*

*Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.*

*Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.*

*No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.*

*When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.*

### MOVIE RESERVATIONS

#### Editor:

I have a few reservations about the film, *The Passion of the Christ*. I see the possibility that more emphasis is being placed on the physical aspect of the crucifixion than on the spiritual. While I appreciate the agony of the ordeal Christ endured (as far as I am capable), it is only part of God's plan for our salvation.

I believe His separation from His Father, indicated by the three hours of darkness over the land (Matthew 27:46 KJV) and His despairing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 25:46 KJV) have great and grave significance as related to our redemption. It is my conviction that at the time, He was experiencing the spiritual torment referred to as the second death reserved for those who never come to Him for forgiveness of sin (Revelation 20:14-15 KJV). The prophet Isaiah speaks to us of the offering of His soul for sin and the travail of His soul being satisfactory to God for the atonement of sin (Isaiah 53:10-12 KJV).

I do not, in any way, intend to minimize the importance of His physical suffering. I believe it was a necessary part of God's redemptive work. I only hope that the movie will move beyond the portrayal of this portion of the story and that those viewing it will not be so overcome by the brutality of the incident that their response will be more emotional than spiritual.

Martha L. Carpenter  
Southaven

### VINDICATED

#### Editor:

I have preached Christ crucified for nearly 40 years. What I witnessed in the film, *The Passion of the Christ*, certainly vindicated that preaching.

It has been my contention for these many years that if there was one place Satan did not want Jesus to go, it was the cross. He did anything he could to prohibit Jesus from doing the will of the Father. From the garden in which Adam fell to the garden where Jesus stood and said, "I am He," from the appearance before the high priest to the last "I find no fault in Him," Satan tried. The snowball that Satan formed when he convinced the woman that she could make it without God grew to such enormity that he could not pick it up! He couldn't stop its rolling through history to that day when the religious crowd would say, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and they did.

He was nailed to the cross. He was lifted up. He spoke to the Father. He spoke to the thief. He spoke to Mary and John. Then God the Father

took over.

All the sins of mankind that had been committed, were being committed, or would ever be committed were imputed to Jesus Christ, and that is what makes the difference. How much blood does he have to shed? Three hours on the cross — that's what it took to bear my sins, your sins, and the world's sins. Three hours and after that blood was shed, Jesus said, "It is finished."

So am I.

David W. Koons, pastor  
First Belleview Church  
Shelby

### BROKEN PROMISES

#### Editor:

I read William Perkins' editorial, *No More Pie in the Sky* (February 26 issue), with reflective applause. I am thankful that Mississippi Baptists have an editor who not only deeply loves the Lord Jesus, but courageously witnesses for Him through his editorial articles.

As I look back upon the fight I led against the legalization of gambling more than a dozen years ago, the echo of gilded promises faintly linger — the promise of more jobs, the promise of educational utopia, and the promise of a money chest for more teachers and better academic facilities. I recall also the promise of extra resources for our state infrastructure.

Now that thousands of our teachers are in jeopardy of losing their jobs and our infrastructure is pitted with potholes, where is the outrage against the casino promises? In the game of baseball if you get caught stealing you're out. I guess in the "gaming" industry you're not out even if you get caught. So what value is the glitter if the gold is gone?

Perkins was right when he wrote, "the price extracted from all of us by legalized gambling grows larger every day." Indeed, gambling is not victimless entertainment.

Dean Register, pastor  
Temple Church  
Hattiesburg

### SUPPORT ACT

#### Editor:

I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but on February 26, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Unborn Victims of Violence Act by a vote of 254-163. Now this bill goes to the U.S. Senate. I hope the Senate will follow the House's lead.

The bill recognizes the unborn child as the second victim of violent crimes against pregnant women. That's why I support this bill. I'm glad the House passed it overwhelmingly, and I hope the Senate will do the same.

If you believe, as I do, in the sanctity of human life, then write, call, fax, or e-mail Senators Trent Lott and Thad Cochran and tell them to support the Unborn Victims of Violence Act.

Kevin Waller  
Meadville

### GRATEFUL FOR LEADERS

#### Editor:

I am grateful for our national leaders, and support their recommendation to withdraw from the Baptist World Alliance. I am thankful for the courage the (Southern Baptist Convention) Executive Committee has shown in addressing what is a difficult and controversial subject. I would especially like to thank Morris Chapman (president of the SBC Executive Committee) for his leadership and continuing effort to uphold the doctrines set forth by God's Word as well as the integrity of the Southern Baptist Convention.

It is my hope that, when given another opportunity, the leadership of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and pastors throughout our state will follow the example set forth by our denominational officers and vote to dissolve all dealings with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Joey Barnard, pastor  
Mt. Olive Church,  
Smithdale

### BAD TIMING

#### Editor:

The timing could not be worse for the Southern Baptist Convention to pull out of the Baptist World Alliance — just at a time when the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, is being seen by thousands of people and the focus on Christians is stronger than ever.

It is important that we present a strong front of unity. This should not be about denomination, but about preaching Christ and Him crucified. So far, no one has said this is the problem.

I do not believe God will look favorably on those who do anything that may hamper the work of those missionaries now serving Him in other regions of the world. Many of them have voiced their con-

cern. Let us remember the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

It is my hope that every messenger to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting this summer will be informed on all the issues to be voted on, and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. What are we thinking that this action will do for the cause of Christ?

Nelda R. Broom  
Pascagoula

### SLEEPING FINE

#### Editor:

The Sunday before Christmas, Elizabeth Martin reminded me that we hadn't taken up the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. I've always taken up an offering and encouraged the churches to give generously for this mission. I share the story of Lottie Moon's life to inform and inspire the church to give as the Lord leads.

We had set a goal of \$1,800. I realized it was too late to do anything of any value in December. I suggested that we put a five-gallon bucket by the pulpit and let everyone bring their change after Christmas for our offering.

David and Diane Owen joined our church this year after being out of church for 30 years. David shared how he had saved quarters all year to take to the casinos during the Christmas holidays, but since he had gotten back in church and let God take control of his life, he knew he would not be going to the casinos. David poured \$400 in quarters into the bucket and shared how he had worried about losing the quarters in a casino, and how he could sleep fine knowing the quarters were helping to further the Kingdom of God. We had a special time of praise and thanksgiving, and we want the world to know the casinos aren't winning it all in Mississippi.

The Lottie Moon Offering from Green Valley Church was over \$3,200. We had another special time of praise and thanksgiving. I hope this encourages you and others.

Floyd Lamb, pastor  
Green Valley Church  
Pontotoc



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## FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

### Acting Decisively

**Esther 2:7, 17; 3:5-6; 4:13-17; 7:1-3; 8:11-13, 16**

By Patsy Foster

In your community there are some things that are about to happen in the lives of others. God wants to intercept those lives. Suppose He wants to do it through you. (Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby and Claude King)

In Queen Esther's community of ancient Persia a horrible plot had been formed against the Jewish people. Haman, an evil and powerful man, sought revenge against Mordecai, Esther's cousin, by convincing King Ahasuerus that all of the Jews should be destroyed. The letters were sent into all the provinces of the kingdom proclaiming that this would take place on the thirteenth day of the month, Adar. Haman was certain



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that he would soon be rid of the stubborn Mordecai, who refused to bow to him. There were secrets, however, that Haman didn't know: Mordecai had raised the orphaned Esther as his own daughter, but more than that, Haman was ignorant of the all-powerful God of the Jews, who had strategically placed Esther in the palace for such a time as this.

It was a time of great mourning, bitter weeping and wailing for the Jews across the vast kingdom. Sitting before the king's gate in sackcloth and ashes, Mordecai sent Esther a message that she should go in to the king to intercede for the people. Esther reminded Mordecai that if anyone approached the king without

being sent for, that person could be put to death unless the king spared them. Mordecai knew that the survival of his people hung in the balance. In Esther 4:13 he told her, "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews" (NKJV). Then he asked the powerful question in 4:14, "...who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther requested that Mordecai call the Jews in Shushan to fast in her behalf for three days, while she and her maidens also fasted. Esther said then she would go in to see the king and "if I perish, I perish" (4:16). On the third day she put on her royal robes and entered the king's court. When he saw her, he gave the signal that she be spared. The king asked what her petition was and promised

to grant her anything, up to half of his kingdom. Esther wisely refrained from answering until the second day when he asked again. Believing the time was right, Esther seized the moment and responded, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated" (7:3-4 NKJV). When the king learned of Haman's horrible plot to get revenge on Mordecai by having all of the Jews killed, he hanged Haman on the gallows that were built for Mordecai. Letters, sealed with the king's signet ring, were sent to all Jewish people, telling them to gather together to protect themselves from anyone who tried to destroy them.

God showed mercy to the Jews by sparing their lives. The decisive action of a beautiful young queen was critical in the reversal

of the death sentence that had been pronounced upon them. God had been preparing Esther all of her life, bringing her to the palace of a king, who loved her and favored her above all women. God is preparing each of us too for His purpose. Whether we live in a condo or a cabin, a mobile home or a mansion, God has placed people around us who need God's intervention in their lives. Suppose He wants to use you to intercept those lives for his kingdom? Are you fearful about intervening in their lives? So was Esther. God was with her. He will be with you, too. Who knows, you may have been brought to this person, this job, this community, this church, for just such a time as this. Realize the remarkable results of Esther's actions: a death sentence was lifted, the promise of life restored, joy and light prevailed. God can use you to affect others' lives in the same way, too.

*Foster is a member of Murphy Creek Church, Louisville.*

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Showing Respect

**I Timothy 5:1-6:2**

By Bobby McKay

Did you hear about the little boy that had a problem with authority? It seems that he constantly wanted to walk around and wreak havoc while his second grade teacher tried to conduct class. One day the teacher finally had enough. She went to the young man and asked him politely to sit down and be quiet. He refused. She asked a second and third time with a little more seriousness in her voice. He still refused. When she finally threatened the punishment of no recess with the other children, he quickly sat down. As she walked from his desk feeling confident that she won a small battle, she heard him say, "I may be sitting, but in my mind I'm still standing!" While the illustration is humorous, the implications are humbling. We live in a world, go to



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work, and attend church where respect or the lack thereof, is a critical problem. In chapter 5 and the first couple of verses in chapter 6 of I Timothy, Paul shows us the value of showing respect to our brothers and sisters in the church.

#### I. HELP THE MEMBERSHIP (5:1-16)

Verses one and two instruct us as the family of God on how we are to treat those in the church that are younger or older than us. It would not only serve us well individually, but it would greatly help a lost world to see that the love of Christ is real to us and not a fable. If we were to put these two verses into practice in our churches, we would seem problems and troublemaking cut to an astonishingly low rate.

In the next 14 verses Paul goes into great detail on ministering to the widows. Paul places the widows of the church into two groups. The first group are the older widows that are over 60 years old and the second group are the widows that are under 60.

It is very clear here what the Lord desires for us to do. The children and grandchildren of the widow should be the first in line to minister to her and help meet her needs. It says in verse four that this method is acceptable in the sight of God. My mother is a nurse in a nursing home and it is so sad — the stories she shares of the older men and women that never receive a call, card, or visit from anyone. The only time that some of them see their children or grandchildren is at Christmas. Shame on us!

Paul is not being cruel to the younger widows in verses 11-16. Paul realized that they were more likely to get married and have children again. He

encouraged this and knew that through this the younger women would discover fulfillment and be a wonderful asset to the church.

#### II. HEAR THIS, PREACHER (5:17-21)

We see here that Paul is an encourager to preachers still today. In verse 17 he tells the pastors and preachers to work hard at the honor of preaching and teaching. Many men that started in the ministry are no longer serving because they misunderstood what it meant to be a pastor. People poke fun at pastors for only working two days a week. If you have a pastor that is doing all he is supposed to, you know that is not true.

Verse 18 says that you should also pay the man of God a wage worthy of his labor. I don't want to beat this point to death, but I believe a church should take care of their pastor. If your pastor is doing the best he can, and is serving the Lord by preaching the Word and loving the people, you can't pay

him too much. The pastor has bills, expenses, and unplanned emergencies just like you do. Be kind to him, and God will continually bless your church.

Fellow preachers, verses 20 and 21 tell us that we shouldn't practice favoritism. There is nothing wrong with having friends in the church, but when the rubber hits the road, and its time to preach, you should preach with the whole congregation in mind and not just those that may give you trouble. Every member of your church needs to be loved and encouraged at some point.

#### III. HAVE A LITTLE RESPECT (5:22-6:2)

Paul ends chapter 5 and starts chapter six discussing keeping yourself free from sin, and also making the good deeds in your life evident for all to see. Also, he teaches us that disrespect isn't pleasing to the Lord, but rather serve your fellow man with a respect that illustrates the doctrines of God.

*McKay is pastor of Spring Hill Church, Waterford.*

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no fax attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit.

All news items are subject to editing.

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape buildings or objects only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 204, Jackson, MS 39205-0204. E-mail: baptistrecord@msbaptist.org



# Christian Performing Arts Festival

February 20-21, 2004  
First Church • Madison



Photos by William H. Perkins Jr.